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Could An Impostor Be Buried in Oswald's Grave?

DALLAS (AP) — Enough doubt has been cast on the identity of the body buried in assassin Lee Harvey Oswald's grave that the remains should be dug up to see if President John F. Kennedy was killed by an impostor, say Dallas County medical officials.

The Dallas County officials point to discrepancies found by their own check of records and to others alleged by a British author who says Oswald may have been impersonated by a Soviet agent.

But officials in adjacent Tarrant County, where Oswald's grave is located in Rose Hill Cemetery, have resisted the proposed exhumation. They say they will do so only if ordered by a court.

Oswald, named as Kennedy's lone assassin by the Warren Commission, was shot to death while in police custody two days after Kennedy's assassination in 1963.

Earlier this year, the House Assassinations Committee said there was a possibility the Warren Commission was wrong in concluding that Oswald acted alone, but said it had no solid evidence.

The assassination spawned many theories, including some that Oswald was part of a conspiracy, that Cuban President Fidel Castro or organized crime played a role in

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the murder or that Oswald himself was a Soviet agent.

"Somebody has raised the question as to who is in that grave. The easiest way to find out is to ... run some tests," Dallas County Medical Examiner Charles S. Petty said yesterday.

"We said to Tarrant County, if you exhume him we'll test him. We have more capability along that line than they do," Petty said. "If there's a question and a reasonable question that science can resolve, then that's our business."

Petty's office was approached in August by an attorney representing British author Michael Eddowes, whose book "The Oswald File" suggests a Soviet agent took Oswald's place while Oswald was in Russia, came to the United States, killed Kennedy and is buried in Oswald's grave.

Eddowes says he has evidence indicating that Lee Harvey Oswald, who defected to the Soviet Union in 1959, was not the man who returned to the United States in 1962 with a Soviet wife and represented himself as Oswald.

Oswald's wife, Marina, who has since remarried, could not immediately be reached for comment.

Eddowes said the 1963 autopsy records fail to record a scar behind the body's left ear from a mastoidectomy Oswald underwent. Records also indicate Oswald's dental X-rays were not compared with the corpse's teeth, he adds.

Petty's office decided to compare its autopsy records with records from Oswald's Marine Corps service, which it obtained from the Navy Reference Department in St. Louis under a court of inquest order, according to Assistant Medical Examiner Dr. Linda Norton.

"The discrepancies were numerous — scars on the body, color of eyes, height," she said. "The differences show up between his (military) entrance records in 1956 and the autopsy. In one his height, for instance, is 5-foot-11. In the other it is 5-foot-9."

"I feel it would be in the best public interest to conduct the exhumation," she added. "However, there are apparent legal disagreements ... and political forces who do not want this body dug up."